2:Purcell G-4 (no date) 1951 AL1 Southeast Asia AL1
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The essential nature of the overseas Chinese is, however, one thing: the traits of their character brought out by subjection to differing pressures and influences are another. In particular, the larger part of the area has for a long period been under the domination of European colonial Powers which, in spite of recent developments, to a considerable degree still maintain their hold. In the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaya, Burma, British Borneo, and Indochina the Chinese have been subordinated to the colonial policies of Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands, Britain, France, and the United States. In Siam, the solitary country to retain independence throughout (though she, too, was moulded by pressures from the West), the Chinese immigrants contributed to the well-being of the Siamese by their services and the admixture of their blood, but it was always the native aristocracy that held the power and, since 1932, the middle-class native revolutionaries. In post-liberation Burma the Chinese are a small minority who must leave the issues to be decided amongst the Burmese parties and communities; in Indonesia they are often uncomfortably at the point of impact of the opposing forces; in Indochina their plight is much the same. In Malaya the upshot of constitutional experiment and the campaign of Communist terrorists of their own race has placed them in a dilemma.

Throughout most of the period of our survey it has been a tenet of the Chinese that they should leave political policy and administration to the local Government, and this remains so in principle in spite of the increasing influence of nationalism and, latterly, of Communism in their midst. The outworn, but still, until recently, serviceable dictum that 'the Chinese don't mind who holds the cow so long as they milk it' has been true of all purely mercantile communities since the dawn of history, and virtually the same remark is indeed made by Communists of capitalism—that it does not mind who governs so long as it draws the profits. But with the growth of the Chinese communities in the Nanyang and the development within them of political awareness the saying has been becoming less and less true.

From the fifteenth to the nineteenth century the Chinese in Southeast Asia found themselves, first in the Philippines, next in Indonesia, then in Malaya, and finally in Indochina, called upon to adapt themselves to a superstructure of government devised by completely strange and alien nations. These nations

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figured as lenders were practically unknown.[1] The charge of 'unconscionable usury and profiteering' is, in the writer's opinion, not proved.

Professor Raymond Firth has gone into the question of Chinese middlemen in the Malayan fishing industry with considerable care. He says that in this role the Chinese performs important functions. He shoulders a great part of the market risks; he supplies considerable capital, in a liquid form, in consumer's goods, or in producer's goods; and he saves the fishermen much trouble in seeking buyers. On the other hand the same observer adds:

> The system obviously has great dangers. It gives him a monopoly, with little prospect of the fishermen reaping the advantages of the rising market, or of even getting much more than bare subsistence earnings, and it tends very often to place them firmly in his debt, with little chance of extricating themselves and building up their own capital.

Among the Malay fishermen this relationship with the Chinese is variously viewed. One group told Professor Firth that they liked it 'because they can get hold of cash easily'. In several other places, however, the fishermen complained of the low prices they received from the Chinese to whom they were bound to sell. Up to 1939 the attempt of the administration to meet the situation by encouraging co-operative Malay associations for fish-marketing had had only a moderate success.[2]

It should be added that the provision of credit on reasonable terms for productive enterprise is finally the responsibility of the Governments. Much progress has been made in some Southeast Asian countries in the establishment of landbanks, co-operative societies, &c., in the last half-century, but these advanced money only for 'productive' purposes, and in Indonesia the people have still to go to money-lenders to obtain money for wedding, funeral,

[1] A London solicitor who was for many years in Malaya, where he had a large practice, remarked to the writer on 10 February 1949, 'I have never known a money-lending Chinese.' Nor can the writer himself, who had considerable experience as a magistrate and as official assignee and liquidator of companies, recollect any such case.

The writer, on the other hand, has known Britons (of presumed respectability) lending money to Indian chetties at a minimum of 12–15 per cent., who in turn lent it to Malays, Chinese, and others at a rate of interest that can only be guessed!

[2] *Malay Fishermen: Their Peasant Economy*, pp. 14, 61.

7: Furnivall
642, 647, 648, 471

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[For a theoretical discussion of the necessity for granting political autonomy to the colonial dependencies of western states and the required changes in administrative practices and economic policy, see cat. 116, pp. 468-512; for discussion of the relationship between the colonies and the colonial powers in the modern world, and the author's proposal for international collaboration in preparing the colonies for eventual independence, see pp. 513-550.]